

~~TOP SECRET~~



9 April 1966

25X1

Copy No.

88

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

THE CURRENT STATUS OF PAVN
INFILTRATION TO SOUTH VIETNAM

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

Office of Current Intelligence

25X1

ARMY review(s) completed.

[Redacted box]

TOP SECRET

GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification

25X1

Approved For Release 2007/03/06 : CIA-RDP79T00826A000500010062-2

Approved For Release 2007/03/06 : CIA-RDP79T00826A000500010062-2

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
9 April 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Current Status of PAVN Infiltration
to South Vietnam

SUMMARY

The number of PAVN troops in South Vietnam continues to grow at a significant rate. [REDACTED]

25X1

[REDACTED] The presence of ten PAVN units of regimental strength along with four separate battalions, totalling some 18,500 men, has now been confirmed in South Vietnam. In addition, there are at least eight to ten other suspect PAVN units in the South which, if confirmed, could raise the total number of PAVN to over 30,000. Available evidence indicates that large-scale infiltration is continuing as the Communists prepare for their rainy season offensive.

In addition to infiltrating regular units, Hanoi has been forced to send in a considerable number of replacements for Viet Cong and PAVN casualties. Many of these replacement troops are being assigned to what had once been purely Viet Cong units as well as filling out depleted PAVN units. Hanoi is also continuing to send in cadre personnel destined for political, economic, and support units of the VC main force. Estimates of infiltration in 1965 total almost 20,000 men, and preliminary estimates for the first two and a half months of 1966 total more than 3,500.

25X1

25X1

Approved For Release 2007/03/06 : CIA-RDP79T00826A000500010062-2

Approved For Release 2007/03/06 : CIA-RDP79T00826A000500010062-2

Recent Infiltration Developments

1. The year 1965 marked a significant turning point in Hanoi's pattern of infiltration. Apparently convinced early in 1965 that their goals in the South were within reach, the Communists began to commit a number of regular army units to South Vietnam in an effort to achieve decisive victory over the Saigon regime sometime in 1965. The large US buildup in South Vietnam has probably frustrated these ambitions. It became necessary instead for Hanoi to continue to pump in more units and more men to counter the US involvement. It has not been confirmed that some 20,000 men infiltrated South Vietnam during 1965--on the average of one regiment equivalent a month. This is almost a 50 percent increase over the confirmed infiltration of any previous year.

25X1

3. It is estimated that some 6,000 troops may have been involved in the December 1965-January 1966 infiltration activity.

25X1

One of these--the 95th "B" Regiment--was confirmed in South Vietnam with a strength of 2,000 men. Captured prisoners from this unit claim that it began its infiltration in late December.

25X1

and arrived in South Vietnam in February 1966. The 95th "B" regiment participated in the early March attack which overran the A Shau Special Forces camp in Thua Thieu Province.

4. A second 325th regiment, 18 "B", has also been reported in South Vietnam. A North Vietnamese soldier captured

25X1

[REDACTED]

His unit also left North Vietnam in late December and arrived in Pleiku in March. The 18 "B" regiment is not yet confirmed by MACV but probably will be shortly as additional information comes in.

[REDACTED]

25X1

7. In addition to the units associated with the 325th, there are numerous indications from prisoners, defectors and captured documents, of the presence of at least eight other PAVN regiments in South Vietnam. These include the 141st, 6th, 19th, and 108th Regiments plus a number of unidentified regiments. Two such unidentified units have been reported infiltrating western Quang Tri Province in I Corps in the past two weeks.

8. Because of the scarcity of information on these reported units they have not yet been accepted in the order of battle. The weight of evidence and past experience, however, suggests that the presence of some of these units will eventually be confirmed.

The North Vietnamese Capability to Sustain or Step-up Infiltration

9. Despite the infiltration of substantial numbers of cadre and regular units from the North Vietnamese Army into South Vietnam during the past few

years, there is little doubt that the North Vietnamese Army has been taking in new recruits at a rate that adequately fills the gaps caused by infiltration as well as those created by attrition and retirement.

DRV public statements together with reports

25X1

25X1

indicate that a large-scale mobilization of manpower has been underway in the DRV during the past year. Most of the 4 million draft-age males in the DRV are now believed to be enrolled in the regular armed forces, some paramilitary organization, or labor repair and maintenance battalions.

10. It is probable that Hanoi will continue, at least through 1966, to draw both on these mobilized personnel, and on regular North Vietnamese Army units for the manpower to make up infiltration units. In addition, approximately 175,000 males reach draft age each year in North Vietnam, and of these, slightly over 100,000 will be physically fit for military duty. From a manpower standpoint the North Vietnamese should have no difficulty sustaining the 20,000-man pace of covert infiltration into South Vietnam which was maintained during the past year, and at the same time provide an increase of as much as 200,000 in the strength of PAVN forces remaining in North Vietnam.

11. From a training standpoint Hanoi should also have no difficulty in sustaining the infiltration rate of 1965. The North Vietnamese have been utilizing a number of their organic regular army regiments (in addition to the 325th Division) to provide the training facilities and staff for infiltrates during 1965. Given the currently estimated strength of the North Vietnamese Army, it is conceivable that the PAVN could train up to 40 regiments for infiltration per year. This would be on the order of 60,000 men.

Training Prior to Infiltration

12. The amount and quality of training received by prospective infiltrators in North Vietnam prior to departure for the South varies widely. For example, a recent study of 125 North Vietnamese soldiers captured in 1965 indicates that the amount of training varied from none at all for two prisoners up to two months for one battalion. For the most part, however, draftees generally receive a minimum amount of training. Cadre personnel--who form the leadership of infiltrated units--generally undergo a rigorous

25X1

selection and training procedure. Almost all of the captured leadership-cadre in the study group (including a large number recalled into the army from civilian life) were products of efficient training schools in North Vietnam. Many battalion-level cadre sent south are combat veterans of the French-Indo-chinese conflict. The quality of cadre personnel probably accounts, in large measure, for relatively good military showing made by PAVN units in the South.

13. Nevertheless, many of the prisoners in the study group described their training as inadequate. All but 13 of the soldiers were draftees. Over one half had less than one year of military experience, and a third had been in the army less than six months.

Utilization of PAVN Personnel in South Vietnam

14. In the last few months North and South Vietnamese personnel are being increasingly integrated into mixed units. One South Vietnamese captive stated that he was one of 40 South Vietnamese replacements in the 500th Transportation Battalion of the Sao Yang or 610th Division. A North Vietnamese prisoner [redacted]

[redacted] stated that at least two battalions of his unit were 50 percent North Vietnamese and 50 percent South Vietnamese. Other reports have suggested that North Vietnamese replacements have been assigned to Viet Cong units such as the 271st Regiment and the 804th Battalion.

15. The assignment of replacements based solely upon their availability and without regard for unit integrity is probably a reflection of the increased number of casualties inflicted on Communist forces in the last year. The replacement problem also points up Viet Cong difficulties in recruiting manpower in South Vietnam and the necessity for North Vietnam to fill the gap caused by mounting combat losses.

16. There is no hard evidence available to indicate that the mixing of North and South Vietnamese personnel is causing any serious morale problems.

25X1

Approved For Release 2007/03/06 : CIA-RDP79T00826A000500010062-2

Approved For Release 2007/03/06 : CIA-RDP79T00826A000500010062-2

VC/PAVN Military Organization in South Vietnam

17. The Communist main force military strength now totals almost 80,000 personnel in twenty-three confirmed regiments (13 Viet Cong and 10 PAVN) and a number of independent battalions. For many years, the largest operating Communist force in South Vietnam was a regiment.

25X1
25X1

18. With the expansion of main force fighting strength, the Communist command apparatus underwent a further evolution into a number of division level units as well as territorial commands.

25X1
25X1Outlook

19. It has been estimated that the North Vietnamese could maintain an average infiltration rate to South Vietnam throughout 1966 of approximately 4,500 men (three 1500-man regiments) per month. During 1965, however, it appears that, on the average, only one 1500-man regiment infiltrated per month.

20. It is now estimated that the Communists can, if they so desire, infiltrate more than 4,500 men per month. Such a rate is also within the capacity of DRV manpower resources, at least in the foreseeable future. The evidence on recruitment of men into the DRV armed forces suggests that Hanoi has encountered little difficulty in replacing those personnel sent south. In fact, it appears that there

25X1

has been a substantial augmentation in the over-all strength of the DRV Army through stepped-up conscription.

21. The growing Communist military main force with its improved command structure, coupled with the increased infiltration effort through Laos provides the basis for an increase in Communist military action in the future. The increasingly sophisticated organizational development of division level units with as many as five regiments may also presage a step up to more conventional warfare tactics by the Communist forces.

25X1

Approved For Release 2007/03/06 : CIA-RDP79T00826A000500010062-2

Approved For Release 2007/03/06 : CIA-RDP79T00826A000500010062-2

TOP SECRET

STAT

Next 8 Page(s) In Document Exempt

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
11 April 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Current Status of PAVN Infiltration
to South Vietnam

The penultimate sentence of paragraph 1, page 2, of the above-cited memorandum which you hold should read, "It has now been confirmed that some 20,000 men infiltrated South Vietnam during 1965--on the average of one regiment equivalent a month."